



Volume 29 No. 7 September/October 2001

# FIRE FIGHTER



**MORRIS BUTTERFIELD**

**THE FBU'S FIRST EVER RETAINED EXECUTIVE  
COUNCIL MEMBER WAS ELECTED 1 OCTOBER 2001**

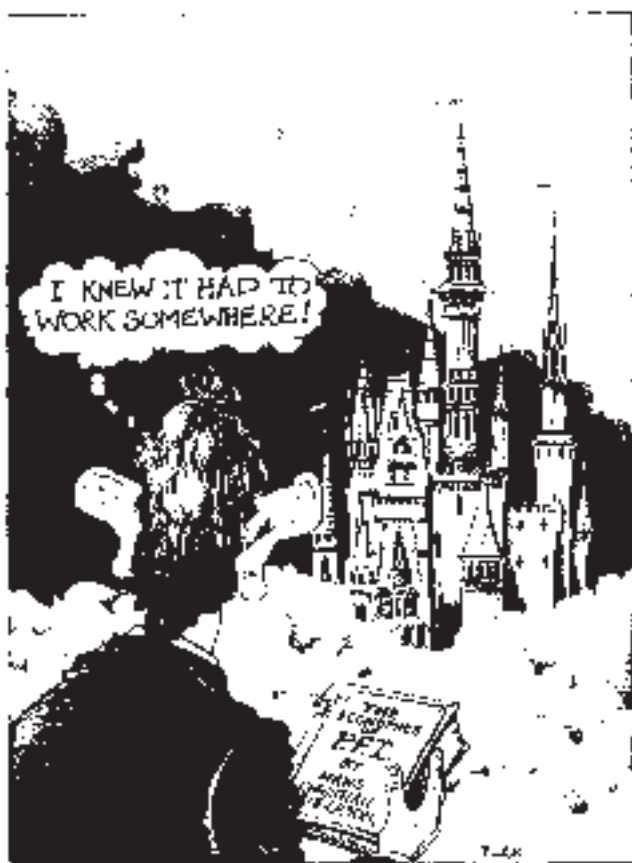


On 1 October 2001 history was made when Morris Butterfield became the first ever Retained Executive Council member in the FBU. Morris has been a Retained firefighter and FBU member since 1978 at Burntisland Fire Station in Fife, Region 1 (Scotland).

He was elected Branch Secretary in 1985 and started to attend Brigade/Retained meetings in Fife and was subsequently elected Retained Brigade Chair and then Region 1 Retained Representative in 1993.

Since 1994 Morris has attended the Union's Annual Conference in Bridlington and the Retained Members Annual Meeting at Wortley Hall.

In 1997 Morris was one of four Retained members who were elected to form a National Retained Advisory Committee. In May 1999 the Rules of the Union were formalised in relation to Retained structures and Morris was elected to the position of National Retained Secretary at the Retained National AGM in November.



## GENERAL SECRETARY

# TACKLING TERRORISM

THE death of over 300 firefighters in the terrorist outrage perpetrated against the people of the United States is a shocking reminder of the risks that firefighters take in protecting and assisting communities the world over.

The FBU has sent its condolences to the IAFF, which represents United States firefighters. Through *Firefighter* we send our heartfelt feelings of sympathy to the families of the men and women killed while carrying out their jobs on behalf of the people of New York and Washington.

I had the honour of visiting the United States at the end of September at the invitation of the IAFF to take part in a Health & Safety Symposium. Preparations for this event began several months ago but it has been given even greater topicality by the terrorist outrage. The paperwork for the Symposium shows that a US firefighter has, during the course of a single year, a 40 per cent chance of being injured and that occupationally induced illnesses exceed the mining, construction and logging industries in the United States.

I did of course take this opportunity to personally convey to the leadership of the IAFF our condolences and solidarity with the Union and its members. I hope we can improve contacts and share information on health & safety matters as well as experience in dealing with major fire incidents.

## THE AFTERMATH

There will be understandable anger and a desire for revenge following this monstrous outrage. We hope, however, once the initial shock has receded that wiser counsel will prevail. We know that there are psychopaths out there. But we also know that many of the dangerous situations which firefighters face have deep seated political causes, which need political solutions. Retaliation bombings, often against poorly defined targets, invariably serve to give a further twist to the cycle of violence and to put the lives of innocent civilians at even greater risk. Killing innocent civilians in "collateral damage" creates a new generation of terrorists and hatred rather than addressing the underlying political causes.



# FIREFIGHTER

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As I write it is unclear who was responsible for this outrage. If it is an Arab terrorist organisation, it highlights once again the need to provide justice for the Palestinians and to end sanctions against the Iraqi people. Only by dealing with denials of justice can the support for terrorism be undermined. The security of the British people, of the Israelis and of the American people is best sought at the conference table, not by state sponsored violence, missiles and tanks.

Of course there is condemnation of the suicide bombers, of the cruelties and failure of the Iraqi Government to address the very real problems of poverty and oppression in their country. But the solution to these problems is not state sponsored violence imposed by the strong on the weak. You cannot bomb a country into democracy; neither can you eradicate terrorism with smart bombs and assassination of leaders. The perpetrators of this outrage must be brought to justice but first they have to be found. The ordinary Afghan people are not responsible for bin Laden and his activities and neither should Arabs or Muslims be held culpable for the outrages committed by a few unrepresentative factions. So any retribution which is indiscriminate will not only be counterproductive, it will also be unjust and immoral.

## THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE

Readers will know that our Union has long campaigned for the rights of the Palestinian people. Since 1947 they have been denied

a national homeland and since 1967, further millions have been displaced by the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli settlements continue to grow on land seen to be within Palestine's future borders. Generations of Palestinians have grown up and died in overcrowded and under resourced refugee camps which at times of tension are subjected to military and police attack by the Israeli authorities. In recent years the Palestinian leadership has accepted the right of the Israeli people to a secure homeland and has sought a negotiated settlement of its own demands.

These are the facts. The FBU position is to support the rights of both the Israeli and Palestinian people to a homeland over which they exercise sovereign control. This is also the policy of the United Nations General Assembly which has condemned the 1967 occupation by Israel of Arab lands and urged that Israel return to its pre-1967 borders as the basis for a two states solution to the dispute. Until now Israel, with the backing of the United States, has refused to accept the UN resolutions and has imposed its military might on the Palestinians. As impasse has followed impasse, terrorist extremism has grown, bred out of poverty and injustice as well as the international community's failure to find a political solution.

Whatever happened on 11 September and whoever is responsible does not change the fundamentals of the Palestine/ Israel conflict. It is necessary to continue to campaign for peace with justice – this is the only way to tackle the underlying causes of terrorism. The first essential step is to secure a cease-fire which requires some commitment from the Israelis that they will negotiate land for peace.

## RACISM

One unfortunate side effect of the terrorist outrage is the reported attacks both in the United States and Britain on Arabs and Muslims. At present, thankfully, these appear to be small in number. These cowardly attacks have been condemned by the politicians and the British press. In these difficult times let us convey our solidarity with the British Muslim community and with refugees fleeing from persecution, oppression and poverty. No doubt there are complex political and social issues involved which need urgent attention and international action. But part of the solution is to treat minorities with the respect that their humanity demands. Like terrorism, racism has no place in the modern world.

**ANDY GILCHRIST**  
General Secretary



F B U C O N F I D E N T I A L F R E E P H O N E H E L P L I N E

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FAIRNESS AT WORK is about treating others as we would wish to be treated ourselves – with respect



11 SEPTEMBER



*Cherie Blair, wife of Premier Tony Blair, looks at ten helmets representing the ten fallen firefighters lost in the World Trade Center attack from New York Engine Company 8, Ladder 2 station. Mrs Blair met relatives of the men lost from the station and their colleagues.*

## Public Services International condemns

THE terrorist attacks on 11 September took a huge toll on members of Public Services International affiliates in the United States.

There were losses of many emergency services workers among the deaths resulting from the airliner crashes into New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon near Washington DC. Many are still unaccounted for at this point.

A large number of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees members worked for government offices located in the World Trade Center. AFSCME also represents a number of the emergency services workers involved in rescue efforts there.

The Service Employees International Union represents about 800 building maintenance workers at the World Trade Center. About 350 of them were on duty at the time of the attack – cleaners, elevator operators and maintenance workers – and it is not known how many were able to escape.

About 235 members of three American Federation of Government Employees local unions worked in the World Trade Center for various federal government offices. Additional AFGE members worked in the Pentagon as Army employees and staff in the office of the Secretary of Defence.

"Our hearts and prayers go out to the victims of these terrorist attacks, and to the hundreds of families that have lost loved ones," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. "And with deep gratitude and admiration we thank the thousands of emergency services and medical workers fighting to rescue and save victims at the World Trade Center complex and the Pentagon."

***This is the letter sent to John Sweeney, President of the AFL-CIO and to all US affiliates of PSI on 12 September, 2001.***

It is obviously with shock and disbelief that we watched the terrible events in New York and Washington yesterday. Our news

## 5th COLUMN

## DISASTER RELIEF FUNDS

The trade union movement has established a Disaster Fund for families of those affected by the attacks. Contributions or inquiries can be made to:  
**NYC Central Labor Council Disaster Fund**  
 386 Park Ave South  
 New York, NY 10016  
 Tel. 00 1 212 685 9552

The PSI affiliate the American Federation of Government Employees has formed a fund to assist families affected by the attacks. Donations to this fund can be made by sending a cheque to:  
**Federal Employees Education & Assistance Fund/**  
**World Trade Center-Pentagon**  
 8441 W. Bowles Ave, Suite 200  
 Littleton, Colorado 80123  
 Tel 00 1 303 933 7580  
**AFGE National Office: 00 1 202 737 8700**  
 fax 00 1 202 639 6490

For those who wish to express condolences or send assistance to the union representing fire fighters who have suffered numerous casualties in the rescue work contact:  
**Harold Schaitberger, General President**  
**International Association of Fire Fighters**  
 1790 New York Ave. NW  
 Washington DC 20006  
 Fax: 00 1 202 737 8418

## terrorist attacks

services are full of stories of the offices of federal workers being evacuated or even being the subject of bomb blasts.

Many federal workers appear to have been killed and hundreds of emergency services workers and police in New York have died in their valiant efforts to save fellow Americans who were the victims of these senseless attacks.

On behalf of all PSI affiliates, I offer you condolences and support as your union copes with what may be the loss of many members and activists or the grief of those who have lost family members.

It will obviously be some time before we know the full extent of the tragedy and I hope that you will let us know, as events unfold, of any ways in which we or affiliates can provide assistance.

**Yours in solidarity**

**Hans Engelberts**

**General Secretary, Public Services International**

## HOW ABOUT IT, TONY?

I've just read the article 'Blair's 40% Pay Rise'. I believe that it would be a much better idea if the PM could increase pensions (75p rise last year) and the minimum wage to the same figure per year as his pay rise (£47,079). This would put a smile on an awful lot of faces and relieve the burden of worry. They wouldn't need his total wage packet, as you can see, just his rise would suffice.

J. Dutton

Retired member, West Midlands

## SICK PAY

A Bedfordshire CFO was awarded a £9,000 pay rise while he was off sick. He then retired without returning to work, which means tax payers are giving him an extra £6,000 on top of his pension, for the rest of his life.

Mike Freeman, 50, had been off sick for 10 months before he retired and was awarded his pay rise during that time. It means he now gets an annual pension of £60,000 (if he hadn't had the pay rise he would only have collected £54,270 per annum for the rest of his life!)

Mr. Freeman was allowed to retire on the grounds of ill health without seeing the Brigade's Medical Panel, which is a pre-requirement for firefighters in Bedfordshire who retire on medical grounds.

Who said it's one law for them and another for us?

Write to **THE FIFTH COLUMN**, c/o The Editor, The Firefighter, Fire Brigades Union, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT2 7AE



**HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER**  
*General President*

## US thanks for FBU support

HAROLD A Schaitberger, the General President of the International Association of Fire Fighters – the US firefighters' union – has thanked FBU General Secretary Andy Gilchrist for the FBU's expression of condolences and offers of support after the 11 September attacks.

"The IAFF is grieving for lost comrades, who answered their final call and our hearts go out to their families and friends. Please be assured that we are doing everything humanly possible to respond to this tragedy and deeply appreciate all the expressions of concern we have received," said Mr Schaitberger.

## TUC REPORT

# Congress overshadowed by terror attacks in USA

THIS year's TUC came to an early close as a mark of respect for the thousands who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.

The move to finish the 133rd Congress on the Wednesday, a day early, was supported by the FBU.

Before delegates observed a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the world's worst terrorist outrage which had shocked the world the previous day, TUC President Bill Morris said: "These horrific outrages have been directed at the American nation and the American people. "But let no-one doubt they represent a fundamental assault on democracy, and democratic values throughout the world.

"The grief of the American people must be our grief, and their determination to uphold democratic values in the face of this assault must be our determination."

On Tuesday, just hours after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, PM Tony Blair discarded his set speech to congress and spoke instead of the "horror and the carnage, and the many, many innocent people who have lost their lives." He described the terrorist attacks as "the new evil in the world today" and said that world democracies must join together to eradicate it.

Before the premature end of Congress, FBU delegate Vicky Knight spoke during Monday's major debate on racism.

Seconding a composite calling on the Government to sign up to Article 14 of the UN Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and for the General Council to encourage unions to support the movements against racism, she said that the roots of the disturbances lay in "economic failure and social neglect."

Race was not the issue, rather both white and black Britons were bearing the brunt of economic forces over which they had no control. Sister Knight said: "As a result unemployment and poverty are rife in all working class communities. "And until now the central and local government response has been inadequate.

"As a result resentment and suspicion has festered and has been exploited both electorally and on the streets by racist and fascist organisations, usually parachuted in from more prosperous areas." She said that young, black Britons, not only suffer from lack of opportunities, but also racism, exploding into incidents of street violence. Referring to civil disturbances in British towns and cities, Sister Knight went on: "Fortunately these proved to be short-lived, but unless the underlying problems are addressed, such happenings will re-occur.

"And it will be our members, the firefighters, who will be asked to deal with the dangerous consequences of civil unrest." She called for public sector investment to provide jobs, houses and amenities, pointing out that private money would then follow.

Sister Knight also condemned the treatment of asylum



*The Congress platform during a minute's silence to mark the American tragedy*





**Above: Vicky Knight addresses Congress.**

**Right: General Secretary Andy Gilchrist speaking at a fringe meeting of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions**



seekers by both the Government and the media as a “disgrace” which had “helped stir up deep-seated prejudice, and concluded: “Let’s make sure that government at all levels responds to the anger and frustration of young black Britons by investing urgently in the economic and social infrastructure of our inner city areas.”

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Patricia Hewitt MP, received a muted response from delegates. She acknowledged the crisis in manufacturing and claimed that new technologies were the industries of the future.

Ms Hewitt skirted the politically thorny issue of Public Finance Initiatives (PFIs) preferring to talk about “modern management at

its best is about empowering people, in the private sector and in public services too.”

If congress had not been curtailed The General Secretary Andy Gilchrist, together with other delegates, would have argued against PFI in what had been planned as one of the major debates. He would have told congress that the initiatives “won’t bring a single extra pound of investment into public services which are crying out for more staff, better buildings and modern facilities.”

The General Secretary would also have urged the need to “build the biggest mass movement since the anti-poll tax campaign” to change Ministers’ minds about PFI.



**The FBU delegation in Brighton**

## VISIT TO IRAQ



*The FBU delegates with Iraqi colleagues*

# Mayday is workers' day



*Regional Secretary Howard Western dons Iraqi clothes*

**Bob Pounder**  
Brigade Secretary GMC

SINCE Mayday is international workers day there could be no better way on an anti-imperialist note than to celebrate this event with the workers of the General Federation of Trade Unions (Iraq) at their rally in the National Theatre, Baghdad. Indeed this is exactly where Howard Western (Regional Secretary) and myself found ourselves on May 1, as the first official British trade union delegation to visit the country since before the 1991 Gulf War.

We were part of an international delegation consisting of members from the Vietnamese Confederation of Labour and other British trade unionists notably from the British Medical Association and the National Union of Journalists.

The rally was an exuberant theatre of dance, poetry recitals, and speeches celebrating the national solidarity and struggles of the Iraqi workers and their trade unions through their tumultuous years of war and revolution. A message of solidarity from the

Vietnamese Confederation of Labour as well as the Fire Brigades Union, which included a call for the ending of sanctions against Iraq, was read out and translated to the rally. This was broadcast on Iraqi television and incidentally, throughout the Arab world.

### THE AMIRAYA SHELTER

The following day we visited Amiraya an area to the west of Baghdad. It was here during the six-week bombardment of Iraq that one of the most horrific atrocities of the Gulf War was committed. On February 13, 1991 in the Amiraya bomb shelter 403 civilians including 52 children and 261 women were executed in a planned and co-ordinated attack when a specially designed armour-piercing missile penetrated the ventilation hole. A second missile instantly passed through this hole creating a deadly inferno.

The shelter was a civilian installation and had been constructed during the Iraq / Iran War, to international standards by a consortium of Finnish companies specialising in structures that give protection against chemical and nuclear attacks. It



comprised a building of three floors (including basement) each with an area of 500 square metres. The roof and ceiling were 1.5 metres thick reinforced with steel bars between three to four centimetres in diameter.

As we approached the shelter Karim, the civil defence fire officer who had led the first team of firefighters into the stricken shelter, met us. He explained entry had been extremely difficult since the initial explosion had caused an electrical failure jamming the steel doors trapping the occupants in the ensuing fire. Consequently a side entry through an emergency door had to be made but the shelter was not immediately accessible because of the intense heat. Breathing Apparatus teams using charged 70mm hose were initially driven back by steam, further attempts to cool the fire produced more steam and boiling water. Emergency lighting was taken into the shelter at the earliest possible time during the operation. Unfortunately the worst fears of the firefighters would be realised. The recovery operation lasted for three days and was difficult since the bodies of many people trapped inside the building had melted into the concrete or were simply unrecognisable. Astonishingly enough Karim was able to tell us that 14 people had in fact survived the blast but they were the ones furthest away from the point of impact. Tragically some parents who had not been in the shelter at the time lost their children in the attack.

We were introduced to Ahmad Djududi who was 11 years old when his mother, father and four sisters all perished in the blast. The profound trauma indelibly printed on Ahmad's life had left him with a permanent feeling of guilt that it was his mother and not him that had perished. The Amiraya shelter has now become a shrine to the people who were massacred. Their photographs surrounded by flowers are a permanent reminder of Western barbarism. Karim was asked how such an event had affected the crews that had dealt with such a tragedy. He conceded naturally of course that, "It had, but duty comes first," he added.

## THE IRAQI FIRE SERVICE

From the dark sadness of the Amiraya shelter we stepped into the Iraqi sunshine. Our driver for the week Abbu Haider drove us to the local fire station. The fire crews were waiting for us standing by brand new fire appliances – Renaults purchased on the oil for food programme. The first replacement appliances since before 1990 we were told as we were served Pepsi-Cola in the station office.

One of the fire officers Mr Dowd explained that the United Nations 661 Sanctions Committee had prevented Iraq from purchasing Chinese fire appliances because certain technical specifications breached the sanctions that are still being enforced by the American and British Government. These sanctions, he continued, "Are having a devastating effect on the country and are responsible for the deaths of children who have committed no crime whatsoever". One of the officers fondly remembered the time he had spent on a course with the London Fire Service. "When the sanctions are lifted from Iraq we would wish to return your visit," said Mr Dowd. He added, "When you go back to



*Fire Officer Karim at the point where US missiles penetrated the Amiraya shelter in Baghdad*

Britain please make it clear that we have no quarrel with the British people and that we distinguish between them and the Government that is imposing these sanctions upon us".

Through our interpreter Saleem Khulaief, (GFTU Foreign Relations Secretariat) we replied that the policy of the Fire Brigades Union was to call for the ending of the continued war and sanctions against Iraq and that this was a campaign that we were committed to.

Before saying our farewells, on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union, a number of small fraternal gifts were presented including badges and a wall plate bearing the FBU logo. A GMC Brigade plaque and fraternal letter from County Fire Officer George Almond was presented and this was also well received.

## THE SADDAM CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

On the same day we visited the Saddam Children's Hospital. There we saw first hand the suffering of children the real victims of the sanctions against Iraq. The hospital was in a poor state of repair since after 1990 no proper maintenance had been carried out. This meant that the lifts were no longer working and that the patients and staff have to endure the stifling heat as the air conditioning system had long since ceased to function. Spare parts for all equipment as well as medicines are either non-

## VISIT TO IRAQ



***A child suffering from leukaemia in an Iraqi children's hospital***

existent or are in extremely short supply. Dr Riyadh Abdul Al-Rawi explained that: "This hospital receives referrals from all parts of Iraq, including from as far north as Mosul and as far south as Basra. The main clinical problems, are malnutrition, gastro-intestinal, chest infections and coping with a 500 percent increase in the incidence of cancer". He went on to say that this was attributable to the depleted uranium weapons used against Iraq during the Gulf War. Iraq is still being bombed. He told us that: "In the street where I live five people have cancer".

Children with leukaemia cannot be treated effectively because of the sporadic availability of essential drugs. This is because the Sanctions Committee holds up and even stops the supply of essential drugs and equipment. Seeing children suffering as we did was a disturbing and harrowing experience. The doctor said: "Please tell people when you return to Britain how our children are dying while we watch them. Tell people that the sanctions must be lifted so that our children can live".

### **MEDICAL CITY**

At the Sadaam Medical City we met Palestinians mostly under the age of 21 who had been wounded by Israeli troops. It was made clear to us that Iraq supported and identified with the Intifada and in spite of the sanctions was making a huge sacrifice in order to provide medical treatment for their full recovery.



***Samir Moussa – making a full recovery***

We met Samir Moussa who told us that on 4 January he had been shot by a sniper during clashes in Ramallah on the West Bank. He explained that a new type of 'butterfly' bullet had penetrated his body and had damaged various internal organs. Samir had also received a bullet wound to the head and sustained further injury from a rubber bullet that had hit him in the back. After four weeks in the Ramallah Hospital where he received no treatment the Israeli authorities allowed him to leave the country for treatment.

Literally dying, Samir Moussa arrived in Baghdad with a body weight by now of only 28 kilograms. At the Medical City he had received many operations, but the director said that he was making a full recovery. Like the other Palestinians who were the patients of Medical City it was patently clear that Samir was not an aggressor, he was just a youngster caught up in a conflict that was not of his making. Even so, the struggle for an independent Palestinian homeland and total opposition to the state of Israel and Western imperialism, no matter what the cost, was the same message that every Palestinian in Medical City was keen to stress.

### **GENERAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS**

In spite of the years of sanctions and Britain's continuing war against Iraq, during our short stay we were treated as honoured guests and friends. On the second day of our stay in Baghdad we attended a meeting of the GFTU where we were welcomed by the President Jamil al-Jabouri on behalf of the Executive Committee. In his opening speech Jamil al-Jabouri remarked that the workers of Iraq and their children had to endure sanctions and genocide as a consequence of Britain and America's actions against them. He said: "The sanctions have continued for 11 years and there has been a lot of sacrifice, we say to you, our brothers, the determination of the Iraqi citizen is significant. We are sure that victory will be ours. It will also be a victory for all fair-minded people, amongst these people our brothers and friends in Britain. Your visit is a message to the enemies of humanity".

### **MEETING WITH THE MINISTER OF LABOUR**

The following day we were privileged to meet the Minister of Labour, Doctor Saddi Tuma Abbass, at his office where, with the

senior members of the GFTU, a discussion on relations between Britain and Iraq took place. He informed us of the awareness in Iraq that there is opposition to the sanctions in Britain and that this has been seen on television.

As well as the hardship and industrial undercapacity arising from the sanctions, the minister very much regretted that the universities of Britain were now no longer available to the thousands of Iraqi students who had in the past had the opportunity to study there. This was having a detrimental effect on cultural life in Iraq. He looked forward to an improvement in relations between our two countries and believed that the British government should not take such a hostile position against Iraq. He said: "However our impression of the British people is that they are friendly and peace loving people".

On the question of the Iraqi regime, the minister said: "Hostile states try to give the picture that the government is isolated from the people of Iraq and that there is some dispute between the government and the people, that the government is there only because it has a security apparatus and is not stable. Surely you have seen with your own eyes the situation as it is. You know that this is not true. Take on the responsibility to convey this through the press and media to citizens in any way you can. Without popular support this government could not have survived till now. We have had to endure thousands of US warplanes bombing this country, after that we were denied many basic necessities including pencils, (Iraq, a country that taught the world to write!) medical textbooks and so on. People smile and enjoy life they get married and have proper social relations. You can oblige people to do most things but you cannot oblige them to smile. Deep in their hearts there is the bitterness of the past few years, but they are also looking forward to the future. Thank you very much again for your visit".

## CULTURAL VISITS

Saleem Khulaief and Abbu Haider worked hard to ensure that our delegation was able to visit many diverse attractions in or close to Baghdad. These visits included Babylon, the holy city of Karbala and the ancient city of Samarra famous for its golden mosque and Spiral Minaret. We visited the teahouses in Baghdad, its markets and art galleries as well as the outstanding Al-Shaheed

monument and museum which features two 40-metre, massive split domes clad in blue ceramic tiles. This outstanding architectural achievement dominates the skyline of eastern, central Baghdad. From the modern to the ancient we were conveyed thirty miles to the South of Baghdad. There on the east bank of the River Tigris we saw the ancient palace of Al-Madain its origins dating back to the third millennium BC. This unique building is distinguished by having the largest single span brick built arch in the world. Built in the third century AD it is described as 'a miracle of architectural planning'.

On one of our last visits we were taken to the Museum of Steadfastness. Here two members of staff, Raghad and Intisar showed us scale models depicting both the destruction and reconstruction of Iraq's infrastructure, industry, schools and hospitals. The allied bombing, cruise missiles, guided laser bombs, cluster bombs and air to surface missiles truly devastated Iraq. In spite of all the sanctions and hardship much of the reconstruction has now taken place. A statement in the centre of a photographic display reads: "By the efforts and hard work of the good people of Iraq the smile returns to all Iraqi children. You can see the children play and the smile on their faces".

## BRITISH TRADE UNIONS MUST ACT

Action from other trade unions to end the sanctions on Iraq is long overdue. The Fire Brigades Union is absolutely correct in taking yet another step in this direction. The current Labour Government is constantly being challenged in areas of domestic policy not least in its disastrous approach to the funding of the public services through the introduction of the Private Finance Initiative. Surely our government is not beyond reproach and accountability in contentious areas of foreign policy. The whole of the trade union movement for internationalist and humanitarian reasons has a duty and responsibility to act. In the fullness of time the Fire Brigades Union position on Iraq will be vindicated. To some of the other bigger trade unions we would express the hope and urge that we will arrive at this event sooner rather than later.

On behalf of the Fire Brigades Union Number Five Region we should like to record our thanks to Mr Karim Abdullah Hamza, GFTU (Iraq) Secretary of International Relations, for organising and helping to make our visit to Iraq a complete success.



*Bob Pounder (left) and Howard Western (right) with Abbu Haider and Saleem Khulaief*



## CUBA



# Wheels in revolution

**Pedal with the Flying Pigeons to deliver 16,000 asthma inhalers to a Havana Policlínico as part of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign's annual sponsored bike ride in July 2002. Simon Bull, a Campaign member, reports back after organising this year's cycle challenge.**

THE boy on the bike waved me to a stop, then smiled and held out a handful of small ripe mangoes taken from the box on the back of his bike. "Gracias" I mumbled, before imitating him and tearing the skin off the top and drinking the juice. We demolished about six fruits before setting off, me on a twenty-one-gear mountain bike, he on an old Flying Pigeon [a Chinese heavy-weight bicycle] that had hardly any brakes, let alone gears. Despite his cargo he kept up with me, which was slightly embarrassing but something I was going to get used to over the following days.

It was one of the many moments to remember on a weeklong trip. The event was fully supported with a comprehensive back-up

service, which meant somebody else carried the luggage and sorted out the accommodation and food, while we were free to cycle at our own pace and experience a rural Cuba not often seen by tourists. There was a physiotherapist to restore tired calf muscles each evening and Nelson, a mechanic with the national cycle teams, who lovingly maintained our chainstays con cariño.

On the first morning in Cuba we met our fellow riders: seventeen of us of all ages, from different backgrounds and with varying cycling experience. As we set off into the Cuban countryside we saw a landscape of sugar cane and banana trees punctuated by thatched and tin-roof houses. The occasion was given a sense of grandeur by the arrival of the local policeman on a gleaming Italian motorbike, who insisted on accompanying us for the first few miles. We stopped at the occasional village for a much-needed guarapo [sugar-cane juice]. It was exhilarating to finally be riding in Cuba, but the hills were hot and thirsty work.

The next day was a longer but much gentler ride to Pinar del Río, the provincial capital. We passed timber mills and agricultural cooperatives bearing socialist slogans and paintings of Cuba's heroes: José Martí, Camilo Cienfuegos and Che Guevara. Most statements were triumphal: 'Always on to victory!' and 'The Revolution Never Dies!' but one group of sawmill workers showed both spirit and a sense of humour: 'If it can be done, we'll find a way. If it can't be done, we'll find a reason!'

Early next morning we crossed into the Viñales Valley, where mountains shaped like huge beehives towered over the fields and houses that dotted the plain. It was a breathtaking, almost eerie sight. A free afternoon gave us a chance to visit a local palm fringed beach for a well-earned swim. That night after our regular 'debrief' with Phil, our tour leader, I sat by the pool sipping a cool mojito rum cocktail and swapped tall tales with my fellow cyclists.

Cycling through the Viñales Valley I made prolific use of the tour bus to supply us with endless bottles of cold water. Riding along one dusty stretch a young girl came running out with a bag of mangoes. Ah, the delights of cycling during the mango season! I looked for something to give her in return but found only a pencil and some dried apricots – she seemed not to mind and ran off happily to show her mother. In the afternoon I punctured a tyre and as I sat waiting for Nelson, the team mechanic, I struck up a conversation with a young Cuban, Ariel. I asked him what he most liked about living in Cuba.

He replied, "Free school and free health care – my mother even got laser treatment for her short sight". When I asked him what the worst thing was he answered, "The transport. The buses are always full so whenever you want to go anywhere you have to spend hours waiting around." I felt doubly grateful for the arrival of our support bus.

We were saved a treat for the last day of the ride – a trip to the caves used as Che Guevara's hideout during the Cuban missile



crisis. Among the items still preserved were the beds used by his bodyguard and the great man himself. Arriving at San Diego de los Baños we were rewarded with a hot sulphur bath, a wonderful end to 210 miles of pedalling.

In Havana we visited the Policlínico [a community health centre] to which our sponsorship money was being donated. After a rousing speech, the clinic Director presented us with our certificates commemorating our achievement. It was both a proud and rather humbling moment. I knew that, valuable though our efforts had been, the staff here worked daily to

## TRADE UNIONS FOR CUBA SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

BRITISH trade unionists will have a unique opportunity to meet their Cuban counterparts at the Trade Unions for Cuba Solidarity Conference taking place in London on Saturday October 27.

The Cuban visitors will represent workers from across the spectrum of Cuban life, ranging from fire fighters to bakers, local government workers to communications workers, health workers to journalists, and workers in light industry to teachers.

In an innovative development, several British unions, at both national and local level, have invited their Cuban counterparts to send representatives from their sister unions.

These include communications workers' union CWU, firefighters' union FBU, bakers' union BFAWU, public sector union Unison, general union TGWU, print union GPMU, journalists' union NUJ and teachers' union NUT.

There will be a number of workshops covering a variety



### Cuba Solidarity Campaign

of issues including the role of Cuban trade unions, equality, health and education, the impact of the US blockade on Cuban workers and human rights and democracy in Cuba.

It will provide a chance to discuss practical solidarity with Cuba and to build links between trade unionists here and in Cuba.

Events will include films, poetry and an exhibition, and the day will come to a spectacular finish with an evening Fiesta for Cuba.

The conference will take place in TUC Congress House in Great Russell Street, London WC1, running from 10am to 5pm. A crèche will be available but must be booked in advance. The evening Fiesta, also at Congress House, will start at 8pm.

■ **The event is organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. For more information contact Maureen Foster on 020 7263 6452 or e-mail [maureenfoster@cuba-solidarity.org.uk](mailto:maureenfoster@cuba-solidarity.org.uk)**



## CUBA



*Greeted by Pioneers –  
Cuba's answer to Scouts and  
Guides*

sustain the benefits of the Revolution.

At our farewell meal in Old Havana we drank to friendships cemented during the past week and toasted our Cuban support crew. But for many of us this wasn't 'goodbye' but rather 'hasta

luego' as we promised to return, bikes and all. A final visit to the towering monument to José Martí, Cuba's national hero, for a panoramic view of this fascinating city, seemed a fitting end to a rewarding week.

# Celebrate Moncada day in Cuba

THE Cuba Solidarity Campaign is organising another sponsored Cycle Cuba Challenge next year. The Challenge is called The Moncada Day Bike Ride and runs from 25 July to 1 August 2002.

The aim is to raise funds to buy children's asthma inhalers. These are in short supply and the cycle group will deliver them directly to the Policlínico in Havana. With 25 participants it is estimated that the group will be able to deliver more than 16,000 inhalers.

The group will be in Havana to celebrate Moncada Day on 26 July, the Anniversary of Fidel Castro's attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba in 1953.

You will need to pay a £200 non-refundable registration fee and then be able to raise a minimum of £1,600. Approximately, £1,200 of this will cover the fully inclusive costs of the Challenge, including flight, hotel accommodation, full board and comprehensive back-up support and £600 will be used to purchase the asthma inhalers.

Participating in The Moncada Day Bike Ride is a great way to raise awareness about Cuba during your fundraising campaign and to be directly involved in delivering much needed medical supplies to Cuba whilst at the same time cycling through the beautiful Cuban rural landscape.

■ If you would like to take part in this event, contact Havanatour on 01707 646463 or e-mail [sales@havanatour.co.uk](mailto:sales@havanatour.co.uk)



for an information pack and Booking Form. Havanatour [ATOL 4636] is handling all of the administrative work for this event. Blazing Saddles, a cycle tour consultancy, designs and manages this event. On booking you will receive a fundraising pack full of ideas and suggestions to help you raise the sponsorship money, an official fundraising letter from the CSC and a detailed itinerary of the 2002 Cycle Cuba Challenge.

Cuba Solidarity Campaign, c/o Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG. Tel. 020 7263 6452. Email: [office@cuba-solidarity.org.uk](mailto:office@cuba-solidarity.org.uk). [www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk](http://www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk)



# TUC calls for three more bank holidays

BRITAIN'S workers not only get the least statutory annual leave in Europe but have to manage on the lowest number of bank holidays as well, according to a recent TUC report.

Banking on your holiday? says British workers enjoy only eight bank holidays a year compared to 12 in Italy, 13 in Austria and up to 14 in Spain and Portugal. And unlike their European counterparts British workers do not have a legal right to take these bank holidays, but have to rely on the generosity of their employers.

The TUC is calling on Government to review bank holiday entitlement and to give British workers an extra three days every year.

Banking on your holiday? shows:

- Britain and the Netherlands have the least public holidays amongst EU countries. But Dutch workers have the right to be paid for their public holidays.
- the UK is bottom of the European league on annual holidays too – combining statutory public holidays (those where workers have the right by law to time off) and statutory annual leave puts the UK 13 days behind the EU average.
- a loophole in the UK Working Time Directive regulations means employers can count bank holidays as part of the 20 day annual leave entitlement leaving some UK employees, in theory with only 12 days annual leave after bank holidays. Figures suggest hairdressers and beauticians are most likely to lose out in this way.
- There is no statutory right for UK employees to take public holidays, or to be paid for taking them. Almost one in five UK employees are not paid for taking public holidays as time off.
- In the UK, workers have no statutory rights to bank holidays, having to rely instead on the generosity of their employers. Whilst this is the case with some of the European bank holidays, the majority are statutory days which employees are entitled, by law, to take.
- Most EU countries have a minimum standard of compensation for working on public holidays, usually a choice of a premium rate or time off in lieu. But UK employees don't have this.
- When it comes to holiday entitlement, British workers are better off in a union. The average trade union member gets 29 days a year compared to 23 days for non-union members.

The TUC says employment rights legislation should support

## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Public holidays (days)		Public holidays and legal minimum annual leave combined	
Austria	13	Austria	38
Belgium	10	Belgium	30
Denmark	9.5	Denmark	34.5
Finland	12	Finland	37
France	11	France	36
Germany	9-12	Germany	29-32
Greece	10-12	Greece	32-34
Ireland	9	Ireland	29
Italy	12	Italy (varies by sector)	32-42
Luxembourg	10	Luxembourg	35
Netherlands	8	Netherlands	28
Portugal	12-14	Portugal	34-36
Spain	12-14	Spain	32-34
Sweden	11	Sweden	36
Britain	8	Britain	20
Northern Ireland	10	Northern Ireland	20
EU average	10.8	EU average	33
United States	13		

public holidays, arguing that:

- it must be made clear that public holidays are not part of the annual leave entitlement in the Working Time Directive (20 days a year)
- Employees must be paid for taking public holidays with an option to be paid at a premium rate or be paid at the normal rate and given an extra days paid leave for working on public holidays.

TUC General Secretary John Monks said: "This report shows that again British workers have been put at the bottom of the EU pile. But they need proper time off work as much as their European colleagues.

"UK workers have the shortest holidays and the lowest productivity in Northern Europe. So offering more holidays makes sense for employers too; happier workers are more productive."

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

# It's no laughing matter

SEXUAL harassment is no laughing matter for the hundreds of thousands of British workers who experience it, according to Jenny Watson, deputy chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). An EOC analysis of employment tribunal cases over the last three years reveals that 90 per cent of those whose claims were successful had lost their job or resigned as a result of the harassment.

Commenting on the analysis, Jenny Watson said: "Sexual harassment, far from being 'Just a bit of fun' as some people try to claim, makes people's lives a misery, affecting their confidence and their health, as well as their performance at work. Our analysis of employment tribunal cases paints a grim picture, but this is only the tip of the iceberg.

"Nearly half of the people bringing a case had not made a formal complaint to anyone at work because there was no one they felt they could complain to, they were too embarrassed, they feared that they would not be believed or they thought they could handle it for the sake of their careers. Many of the people we talk to have put up with harassment for months or even years before contacting the EOC.

"It is time to get this issue out in the open. We have launched online advice on our website, a leaflet for individuals, What would you do if your boss asked you for a blow job? and a good practice guide for employers. No one should have to suffer in silence."

Previous research found that only 5 per cent of people facing sexual harassment at work ever make a formal complaint and of those who do, only 10 per cent ever get as far as a tribunal hearing. It has been estimated that over half of women workers and nearly ten per cent of men have experienced some form of sexual harassment at work.

The EOC's analysis of sexual harassment cases that went to an employment tribunal found that many of those who suffer harassment are young women who have been in a job for less



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTAGE DIGITAL.CO.UK

than a year and are often in low-paid jobs such as shop workers, carers or factory workers.

In a third of cases the harasser was the director or the owner of the organisation and in a third of cases they were the immediate manager of the person being harassed.

In nearly all cases the harassment was over a prolonged period. Half of those taking cases had been harassed for over two months and more than a quarter had put up with harassment for over 12 months before making a complaint. Employment tribunals were more likely to dismiss cases where the employee had not made a formal complaint to their employer, or they failed to file a claim within the three-month time limit.

What would you do if your boss asked you for a blow job? the leaflet published recently by the EOC, makes it clear that sexual harassment is against the law and points individuals to online advice available on the EOC website ([www.oec.org.uk](http://www.oec.org.uk)).

As well as helping employees to understand their rights, the EOC is calling on employers to take responsibility for preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. They recommend that employers:

- adopt a clear policy that sexual harassment will not be tolerated in the workplace;
- spell out what kind of behaviour is unacceptable;
- make sure victims know how to raise concerns and feel confident in doing so; and
- investigate problems and take firm action to stamp out harassment when it occurs.

**LRD Fact Service**

# Back Youth Employment Network, urges UN chief

**On International Youth Day, 12 August, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed the fight against aids and unemployment**

ON INTERNATIONAL Youth Day, we celebrate the contributions that young people make to our world, and promote awareness of the challenges young people face. On this, the second observance of International Youth Day, two issues merit special attention: health and unemployment.

The special session of the United Nations General Assembly on HIV/AIDS held in June highlighted the alarming vulnerability of young people to the disease. Every minute, five people between the ages of 10 and 24 are infected with HIV.

Worldwide, that age bracket accounts for at least one third of all people living with HIV or AIDS. The special session identified measures that can help curb the spread of the virus among young people, such as providing access to the information and education necessary to reduce vulnerability to HIV. I strongly encourage governments to carry out the steps to which they agreed in the Declaration of Commitment.

There are roughly 70 million unemployed young people in the world today, and many more are struggling for survival on low wages and in poor working conditions, often in the informal sector, with little or no job protection, benefits or prospects for the future. Unemployment affects young people disproportionately: the 15-to-24 age group accounts for more than 40 per cent of the world's total unemployed, and youth unemployment rates are typically two to three times higher than the rates for adults. Being unemployed as a youth takes an enduring toll, damaging prospects for employment later in life. To break this destructive circle of despair, poverty, and social instability, the United Nations, International Labour Organization and the World Bank have jointly launched a Youth Employment Network to come up with proposals that cover the full range of the challenge of youth employment. I strongly urge governments and our many other partners to support this initiative.

Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies.

## Child labour fine for McDonald's franchise

TWO McDonalds restaurants in one of Britain's wealthiest areas have been heavily fined for exploiting child workers. Ten schoolchildren, including a girl who worked 16 hours on a Saturday and another who worked until 2am on a schoolday, were found to be illegally employed at a McDonald's in Camberley, Surrey.

The company that holds the franchises for the restaurants, Ikhya Enterprises, was fined £12,400 by north-west Surrey magistrates after admitting 20 offences of illegally employing schoolchildren. This is thought to be one of the largest fines imposed on a company for breaking laws relating to child working conditions and has been welcomed by child employment experts as evidence that the courts are beginning to take such offences more seriously.

The restaurants in Camberley were visited by child employment officers in January after a parent complained. Officers found that none of the children had work permits, which an employer must obtain from the local authority if giving work to children of school age.

The company applied for the permits and was given a formal warning. But during three weeks in May and June, the officers revisited the restaurants and identified 51 breaches of the regulations involving 10 schoolchildren aged 15 and 16. Ian Hart, Surrey County Council's child employment officer said: "One 15 year old girl worked 16 hours on a Saturday and another girl worked from 5pm until 2am the following morning on a schoolday."

Children aged 15 and 16 can only work eight hours on a Saturday during the school term. They can only work for two hours at the end of the school day, but must stop by 7pm.

Commenting on the court, Brendan Barber, Deputy General Secretary of the TUC said: "Given that McDonald's heavily target children and young people, they have a special responsibility to ensure their young employees are not distracted from school-work."

"The courts were right to hand out this heavy fine. We hope other Councils will ensure McDonald's franchisees obey the law."

**LRD Fact Service**



**VIEWPOINT**

# We must build an alternative political leadership to New Labour

ANDY Gilchrist's and Joe Hearne's articles in last month's *Firefighter* are a welcome addition to the debate on New Labour. This debate is taking place in the wake of our decision at FBU Conference to allow funding of political candidates who better represent the policies of the FBU. There is no denying such candidates exist. The Socialist Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party achieved very credible results at the last General Election on a platform of supporting workers' struggles against privatisation and taxing the rich to pay for public services. In Scotland Tommy Sheridan of the Scottish Socialist Party is a member of the Scottish Parliament.

The FBU isn't alone in considering alternatives to New Labour. Unison's Annual Conference has ordered a "review" on funding the Labour Party. The GMB has withheld £1 million funding and will spend it campaigning against New Labour's privatisation drive. Even TGWU leader Bill Morris, has threatened to use his Union's funds to support the Liberals against New Labour. All of this reflects a growing anger from below, everywhere workers are rejecting New Labour and are asking what kind of political alternative do we need?

Clearly, the Liberals are no alternative. They are for PFI and the anti-trade union laws. Recently they've been able to appear left wing, simply because New Labour has moved so far to the right. But in Local Government they've been every bit as vicious at forcing through cuts as New Labour and the Tories. The fact is, the Liberals have always been a pro-business party absolutely committed to capitalism and therefore hostile to the working class and the struggle for socialism.

So what kind of political Party do we need?

In his article, Andy Gilchrist argues we should continue to support the Labour Party. He says Labour is "our party" and that candidates not affiliated to Labour are "outside the democratic loop as far as the FBU is concerned." But look who's inside! McDonalds have paid Blair to be at their corporate bash at the Labour Party Conference! (Trade Unionists are not invited). But since when was McDonalds affiliated to the Labour Party?

This isn't democracy. Democracy is about listening to the majority and the majority doesn't want PFI, the free market or "son of star wars". We want to live our lives free from the environmental destruction and the poverty and war global capitalism is forcing on us. This is what the mass protests at Seattle, Prague and Genoa were all about and it's this, the idea of an alternative world, which Blair's lined up with the multinationals to oppose.

But an alternative world is what we need and to get it we need alternative political leadership. Can we rely on our trade union leaders for this? So far they've not organised a single national

demo against New Labour. Union leaders are angry with Blair, but despite the fighting talk they are refusing to call the action we need to stop New Labour's attacks. This is because even if Labour is attacking workers, Union leaders still see Labour as "our party" and end up defending it.

This is Andy Gilchrist's position and it's what Joe Hearne argues against.

Joe says that Labour's capitulation to neo-liberalism and the global corporations, has left "the majority of ordinary people unrepresented and marginalised." He points out that this, coupled with New Labour's attacks, "may lead to a situation similar to the thirties with the re-emergence of far-right parties exploiting the despair felt by victims of growing disparity ... and social exclusion."

In the wake of increased nazi activity resulting in "race riots", increased racist attacks and the racist murder of an asylum seeker in Glasgow, Joe's words are a chilling reminder that the nazis breed on people's despair.

In such a situation it is vital that socialists offer hope.

We need to point out that New Labour's Tory policies are to blame for the poverty and unemployment we face and that the racist scapegoating of refugees and asylum seekers plays into the nazis' hands.

We need to unite everybody against the nazis by pointing out that the BNP and the NF support Hitler and the gas chambers and that they are seeking to divide us along racial lines in order to defeat us all.

In order to combat this we need to reject everything that divides the workers movement and unite black and white, gay and straight, Jews and women, in a massive fight back against New Labour. Only by fighting back can we secure the unity we need to beat the nazis.

It's crystal clear the workers' movement faces a choice. We either both unite and stand up to New Labour and their corporate backers or we will be defeated. I must warn against defeat and urge all workers to unite and fight. Moreover, I agree fully with Joe Hearne's statement that to be successful "it is absolutely crucial we turn the Trade Union Movement away from its slavish adherence to the Labour Party".

This means breaking with New Labour and building an alternative political leadership based in and supporting the interests of the working class. I believe the Socialist Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party has made a very good start and deserves our Union's support.

Neale Williams  
Group Secretary, London

# There is an alternative to public private partnership and privatisation

THE Prime Minister, in his election campaigning and subsequently, following the electoral landslide, placed considerable emphasis on the need to “reform” the public services with education and the National Health Service (NHS) to the fore in his thinking. He implied that past ideology should not be allowed to stand in the way of proposals to enhance the public services that would enable them to reach “world class” status.

To that end the input of private finance and management techniques would be encouraged in both schools and the NHS. In the Government’s first term of office a number of schools were passed to the private sector, some with a measure of success but *not necessarily any better than comparative schools remaining under control of the Local Education Authority*. During the same period it is claimed that 60 new hospitals have been, or are being built as a result of PPP agreements. These agreements permit the construction of new hospitals (often with fewer beds than those they are intended to replace) and are made available to the NHS on a long-term lease at rates fixed to guarantee an agreed return on capital over the life of the lease. In some cases, it would not be the NHS but the private sector that would also operate the hospital. It is intended that at the end of the lease, (in 30, 40 years?) the building may revert to the NHS.

## PRIVATE PROVISION

Waste disposal, cleaning, catering, at one time part of NHS in-house provision have, along with other services, been off-loaded to private providers with contracts that did little to protect erstwhile NHS employees, or for that matter achieve any noticeable improvements. In those circumstances the contracts have been terminated. In some cases the hospitals concerned have reverted to in-house provision.

## ‘NHS NOT FOR SALE’

Ministerial pronouncements since the general election have pointed to these “private sector” providers and the ability of the NHS to use private sector hospitals and clinical services against NHS, (i.e. taxpayers’) funding as an example of a non-ideological, pragmatic approach to a better NHS. The Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, has intimated that a patient doesn’t care where he/she is being treated whether it is in a NHS or private facility; and that healthcare will always be free at the time of need and at the point of delivery. On Wednesday 27 June, the Health Secretary told MPs, while defending the private financing of hospitals, that: “The NHS is not for sale”, that it will not be privatised, but went on to add that where appropriate the private sector can be involved in the NHS whether it be in the provision of finance or expertise (i.e.

management techniques). If there has been a failure of management in many NHS Healthcare Trusts, could it be as the result of past and present Governments’ predilection for appointing placemen (often from the private sector) as Chairmen and Chief Executives? To say that it is necessary to bring in “private sector expertise” to solve the problems of the NHS is a slur on the dedication of the many thousands of staff often working long hours with inadequate reward, be they doctors, nurses or ward cleaners. Their expertise, along with that of the community operating through the Local Authority, could give true meaning to “partnership” even in those areas where the involvement of the private sector is deemed desirable.

## TRUE PARTNERSHIP

It could be assumed that the Government’s meaning of partnership as in PPP (Private/Public Partnership) is geared primarily to the provision of private finance alongside funding from the Treasury. There appears to be little in their understanding that partnership should also include the involvement of those working in the NHS, but also the involvement of the community as well as complete accountability to the Local Authority if the Government’s objectives are to be met. Without that involvement and accountability there can be no true “partnership”.

The Government has made the improvement of the public services the measure of its success in its second term of office. It boasts of the vast sums that it is injecting into the NHS and that private sector finance will be acceptable “on a partnership basis”. But any private sector finance involved in the construction and servicing newly built PPP hospitals will have to be serviced from the NHS budget (i.e. Treasury allocation), a procedure that will last as long as the leasing contract, as the NHS has no meaningful revenue stream of its own.

## WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

New medical technologies and procedures are increasingly expensive, the demands on the National Health Service will increase especially as the population gets older, funding of salaries will have to keep pace with the increased expertise of the Staff and to encourage recruitment of the many thousands of doctors and nurses so vitally needed.

The Government (and future Governments) will have to address this problem if the NHS is to become and remain one of a “world class” status. It can either:

- Increase the involvement of the private sector, which would exacerbate the problem.
- Increase the funding of the NHS by the Treasury by cutting

## VIEWPOINT

back on other Public Services.

- c) Allow the NHS and private providers to charge patients for healthcare whether in hospitals or at GP surgeries.

If “privatised” means the wholesale hiving off of the NHS to the private sector with the creation of a shareholding organisation (as were the utilities during the Thatcher years) option (c) would allow the Government (or any future Government) to claim that the NHS has not been privatised, in keeping with the claim that “NHS is not for sale”. But to any patient the loss of the safeguard that “healthcare will always be free at the time of need and at the

point of delivery,” would be tantamount to the end of the NHS.

There is yet another alternative. The Government can turn its back on PPP initiatives, raise taxes for the NHS current (i.e. day to day) requirements and borrow the financing for the capital needs of the current and future NHS infrastructure. Equally important is a much needed reassessment of its concept of partnership by the inclusion of NHS Staff, Community and Local Authorities.

Otherwise PPP would not be an alternative to privatisation, but an open door to it.

**Ted Brandon Brandon@ukgateway.net**

# Twenty-five reasons to oppose PFI

## 1. PFI/PPP AFFECTS ALL STAFF

PFI/PPPs create artificial divisions between services: for example, dividing teams between white collar and manual services and between core services and supplementary activities. Once the private sector controls the operational management of facilities, it can influence service delivery policies, making a nonsense of the notion of integrated services and joined-up Government.

## 2. PFI/PPPS ARE MORE EXPENSIVE

The Government can borrow at lower rates of interest than the private sector. PFI increases the cost of hospital building. Total project costs (construction and financing) in a sample of hospital projects were between 18-60% higher than the construction costs alone (eg, North Durham 60.6% higher, Norfolk 49.1% higher, Bromley 35.8% higher and Greenwich 30.8%).

## 3. ESCALATING PROJECT COSTS

Escalating costs are a common feature of PFI/PPPs. Birmingham City Council's schools project rose from £20m for eight schools to £70m for ten schools prior to selecting a preferred bidder. The first 14 NHS projects had an average 69% cost increase.

## 4. WHOSE VALUE FOR MONEY?

The money saved is much less than usually claimed. The first PFI school project, Colfax School in Dorset, was only about 2% less than the public sector comparator. The Dartford and Gravesham Hospital is expected to cost a mere 2.8% less than the public sector comparator.

## 5. GOVERNMENT PAYMENTS COMMITTED

PFI contracts commit public bodies to revenue payments for 25-35 years. By 1999, future commitments for signed deals totalled £83.8bn up to 2026, with the true financial commitment more likely to be £415bn. Future Governments may have to raise taxes, impose charges for services which are currently free, reduce borrowing to finance remaining public services or cut spending in non-PFI/PPP services. The cost is like future debt service requirements under the national debt – and potentially, more onerous, since the public sector must procure a specified service over a long period of time when it may well have changed its views on how or whether to provide it.

## 6. AFFORDABILITY GAP

Because PFI/PPP projects combine the cost of building new facil-

ities with the cost of running them and are all paid from the revenue budget, these budgets must increase to cope with the additional expenditure, which frequently means cuts in other services. For example, the Outline Business Case for the Wakefield Street lighting project showed a £729,000 increase in the annual street lighting budget (£18.2m over 25 years), a 35.3% increase on current expenditure. Three local hospitals were closed to help finance the Dartford and Gravesham PFI hospital, with a community hospital also under threat.

## 7. GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY

Local Government PFI/PPPs receive revenue support subsidy in the same way as if they were publicly financed projects. £800m per annum is currently allocated.

## 8. HIGH TRANSACTION COSTS

Because each party has a battery of legal, financial, management and other advisers, fees are substantially greater than those incurred in market testing. Disputes during a 25-year contract are likely to bring in another flurry of invoices from advisers. Adviser costs of the first 15 NHS PFI hospitals were £45.2m: £20.4m fees for lawyers, £14.6m for financial advisers and £10.2m for management consultants and other advisers.

## 9. PUBLIC SECTOR COMPARATOR FLAWED

The Public Sector Comparator (PSC) – a benchmark to assess the potential value of a PFI project – is open to manipulation because PFI project teams exaggerate innovation and benefits of PFI options, while assuming limited scope for innovation and efficiency improvements in the public sector. They also frequently underestimate the full cost of the PFI option.

## 10. SELLING LAND AND ASSETS

Gaining control of surplus land and buildings, such as school playing fields, for property development provides an important source of profit for PFI/PPP projects. Some PFI/PPP hospital developments have changed from a mix of refurbishment and new build on existing sites to large new complexes on out of town Greenfield sites. Patients and staff bear the additional travel costs and Government has to finance road improvement, traffic and transport changes.

## 11. TRANSFORMING CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Financial and construction markets require PFI/PPPs to compete



with other investment opportunities and as the state becomes increasingly reliant on PFI/PPP projects, markets are likely to force up the cost of borrowing, construction and related costs.

#### 12. RISK

As the private sector gains increasing control of infrastructure and delivery of support services, it will be able to influence supply chains of users, the growth of private services in “public” facilities and third party use of spare capacity and to reduce its financial risk.

#### 13. LACK OF DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Companies are accountable only to shareholders. Most partnerships are cloaked in secrecy. The state and private contractors collude to protect intellectual property rights, citing commercial confidentiality to minimise disclosure, participation, assessment of deals and public accountability.

#### 14. SERVICE FAILURES

The performance of the major computing PFI/PPPs has been less than successful. In addition, 14 local authority housing benefit and revenue contracts out-sourced to private contractors caused havoc in 1999-2001. Five contracts have been terminated.

#### 15. PUBLIC SECTOR LOSES CONTROL

PFI/PPP assets should revert to public ownership at the end of the contract, but this is fairly academic because in 25-35 years time, public sector capital spending may have almost vanished and public bodies may not have the capacity or political commitment to assume responsibility for facilities. In these circumstances, another PFI/PPP seems almost inevitable.

#### 16. PRIVATE SECTOR DICTATING PUBLIC NEEDS

The replacement of detailed specifications will inevitably mean that private interests and profit-making squeeze out public need in the design and planning of public facilities. For example, Glasgow Council decided to refurbish 26 secondary schools and build two new schools under a £1.2 billion PFI project. However, the 3Ed Consortium persuaded the Council to change the scheme to 12 new schools and refurbishment of the remainder. PFI/PPP has become another means by which the private sector can profit from public need. The rates of return on PFI projects have varied between 10% and 20% – high by commercial standards.

#### 17. TWO-TIER WORKFORCE

PFI is blamed for an estimated 150,000 job transfers and 30,000 job losses between 1998 and 2007. Women bear the brunt of job losses and wage cuts.

#### 18. IN-HOUSE SERVICES

Although the Government has stated that in-house services may be involved in PFI/PPPs on grounds of efficiency, the greater the degree of in-house involvement, the less risk is transferred to the private sector. This means other risks will have to be transferred. Since PFI/PPPs are not limited to new building, contractors can take over services in other buildings on the same site and the subsequent loss of work is likely to lead to the closure or sale of in-house services. PFI/PPP consortia will be well placed to asset strip public sector organisations across a city.

#### 19. BEST VALUE

Consultation with users is limited to agreeing the service

standards to go in the “Invitation to Negotiate” – questioning the basis of the PFI/PPP project is ruled out. Claims that projects will give value for money are usually founded on rigged Public Sector Comparators and on Best Value service reviews which have been distorted to make PFI/PPP appear the best choice rather than to weigh up the options objectively.

#### 20. REFINANCING

PFI consortia are refinancing deals to increase their profits substantially. Once facilities are built and many of the risks have been eliminated, PFI/PPP consortia can refinance their projects at lower interest rates – and increase profits by pocketing the difference between the original and new financing costs. Group 4 and construction group Carillion almost doubled their returns from the Altcourse prison contract in this way.

#### 21. CONTRACTOR ORGANISATION

PFI/PPP has accelerated construction industry expansion into facilities management, extending the scope of the industry from design and construction to a wide range of support services. The combining of finance, construction and support service companies into a new owner-operator industry has been warmly welcomed by the Confederation of British Industry.

#### 22. PUBLIC INTEREST

There has been an erosion of the notion of “public interest”. Given the current political consensus about the role of private capital in the economy, policies and projects are approved with fewer fundamental questions being asked. Projects are assumed to be in the public interest or, if private gain is transparent, they are approved because the public sector is getting something it needs.

#### 23. PROCUREMENT PROCESS

PFI/PPP imposes new, more complex processes on the public sector, almost eliminating in-house competition and smaller companies. Transaction costs are high, but from the multinationals’ perspective form a useful barrier to market entry. They are ultimately funded by the public sector – absorbed into tendering prices as “the cost of doing business”.

#### 24. SHIFTING BALANCE BETWEEN CAPITAL AND THE STATE

PFI/PPPs represent capital and the state forging a new relationship based on negotiated deals, long term service contracts, shared risk and guaranteed payments irrespective of the state of public finances. Capital is further embedded in the planning and delivery of public services.

#### 25. CORRUPTION

A new age of corruption and sleaze is inevitable with a plethora of joint ventures and non-accountable quasi-public organisations responsible for large sums of public and private money to progress deals negotiated behind closed doors – on a scale codes of conduct are powerless to address.

■ This survey is indebted to *Public Services or Corporate Welfare: Rethinking the Nation State in the Global Economy* by Dexter Whitfield (Pluto Press, 2001). For more information see website: [www.centre.public.org.uk/briefings](http://www.centre.public.org.uk/briefings).

**LETTERS**

# MOST DANGEROUS PLACE FOR UNION MEMBERS

Dear Firefighter,

Some months ago a number of Unions came together to discuss the awful situation in Colombia. At that time Colombia was recognised as the most dangerous place in the world for trade unionists to operate in. So much so that 1,522 trade unionists had been assassinated in the past 15 years, mostly by paramilitary groups.

Those Unions present felt that something had to be done to help and support trade unions and trade unionists in Colombia.

An inaugural meeting was held. The attendance at that meeting included trade unions, a number of MPs and organisations such as IER, ICTUR, War on Want, Liberation, LASO collective and Tribune.

That meeting agreed to set up a new organisation called "Justice for Colombia", its function would be to form relationships and work closely with sister Unions in Colombia, to campaign both with them and on their behalf, to raise issues that the Colombian trade unions believe to be relevant within the trade union and wider labour movement in this country and in Europe.

The Justice for Colombia organisation elected myself as the Chair and Mick Rix, General Secretary of ASLEF, as the Vice-Chair. The meeting also agreed a constitution, which is attached.

Unfortunately, since that date the situation in Colombia has deteriorated, the death toll has risen and attempted assassinations have also increased.

The evil hand of the paramilitaries has become much broader. Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, produced a 58-page report that stated: "many of those killed by the paramilitaries are first tortured and there are cases of systematic violations of human rights, including rape. It is estimated that 12 children die violently every day."

It would not be wrong to suggest that all of these atrocities and assassinations are committed with complete impunity, the paramilitaries appear to operate without fear from the Colombian Government. I am appealing to your members to affiliate to "Justice for Colombia". Both the trade unionists and the people of Colombia desperately need our help.

**Ken Cameron**  
Chair

## JUSTICE FOR COLOMBIA

The name of the organisation shall be : JUSTICE FOR COLOMBIA

### OBJECTS

The object of the organisation is as follows:

1. To promote and organise interchanges and activities between trade union groups in Great Britain and Colombia.

2. To support and promote trade unions and other such organisations in Colombia defined as popular organisations and human rights groups in their struggle for human rights, social justice and democracy.

3. To support and promote a peaceful solution to the conflict that exists in Colombia.

4. To express opposition to USA's intervention known as "Plan Colombia".

5. To recognise and publicise the fact systematic assassinations of trade unionists as a direct result of the action of the paramilitaries.

6. To call upon the Government in Colombia to end the collusion between the official armed forces and the paramilitary death squads.

7. To call for an end to the impunity which is provided by the Colombia state to the paramilitary death squads.

8. To recognise the role that is played by the multinational companies in reducing worker's rights in Colombia.

9. To demand that ILO fundamental principles and ratified conventions are implemented in Colombia.

10. To support the demand for full consultation between mining and oil multinationals and the local communities that are affected by their projects.

11. To support the people in the local communities that have had their land rights violated by the activities and projects of the multinationals.

12. To support the people of Colombia in their right to protect Colombia's rich bio-diversity.

13. To support and campaign for refugees from Colombia to have the right to seek asylum.

### COST OF AFFILIATION

National Unions £150.00 per year

Regions/Districts £50.00 per year

Individuals £10.00 waged per year, £ 5.00 unwaged

### BANK ACCOUNT

There will be a bank account opened in the name of Justice for Colombia.

The use of the account will be to cover expenses incurred by the officers in conjunction with the campaign and activities surrounding the campaign which would include such things as listed below:

Expenses to attend meetings

Hire of halls and rooms for meetings

Adverts and advertising

Support for Colombians visiting this country for the purpose of promoting the campaign

Educational activities that may be necessary in conjunction with the campaign

The bank account will be audited annually and a full report will be submitted to the AGM. Cheques will need to be authorised by the Chair or Vice Chair and the Secretary.



# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS®

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER  
General President

October 8, 2001

Mr. Andy Gilchrist, General Secretary  
The Fire Brigades Union  
Bradley House  
68 Coombe Road  
Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE  
England

Dear Brother Gilchrist:

On behalf of our affiliates in New York and our 245,000 members across North America, I am writing to personally express my most heartfelt gratitude for your generous donation to the New York Firefighters 9-11 Disaster Relief Fund.

I am moved by your response to this tragedy, and your concern for the families of the more than 340 fire fighters who bravely gave their lives on that terrible day so that others might live.

We at the IAFF are grieving our fallen members, and we know that nothing we do will bring them back. Naturally, our thoughts also turn to the families of those fire fighters who died in the line of duty on September 11 in New York.

In that regard, there is great comfort in knowing that the overwhelming tide of sympathy and generosity that has poured in from around the world will make a significant difference in the lives of those who have been so closely affected. As a direct result of compassion like yours, the families of our fallen fire fighters can face their grief while knowing that the present and future financial burdens they encounter as a result of their loss have been addressed.

I am glad that you had the opportunity to attend the Redmond Symposium and I appreciate your taking the time to meet with me to present your generous donation. I hope you found the meeting interesting and of value to your membership.

Again, thank you for your generous donation to the New York Firefighters 9-11 Disaster Relief Fund. It will go a long way toward helping the families affected by this tragedy and is deeply appreciated by everyone in our organization.

Sincerely,

Harold A. Schaitberger  
General President

1750 NEW YORK AVENUE, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006-5395 • (202) 737-8484 • FAX (202) 737-8418 • WWW.IAFF.ORG

## LEGAL REPORT

OUR Retained member was a rear seated passenger in the fire appliance on its way to an incident when it came into collision with a blue Rover motor vehicle which caused the vehicle to turn over and come to rest on its roof. Our member sustained a wedge fracture of the body of the first lumbar vertebrae.

Our member's wholtime employment was that of self-employed builder and plumber. Our member was off work for some 29 months following the accident and subsequently had to dramatically alter the nature of his work as such that his earning



THOMPSONS  
SOLICITORS

capacity was adversely and significantly affected. Our member is left with permanent back pain, which is aggravated by activity.

In addition he developed a post-traumatic stress disorder, from which he continues to suffer and which is likely to be permanent.

In March of this year our member accepted the sum of £190,000.00 in settlement of his claim.

Our thanks to Richard Grayson, Thompsons, for the work that was carried out to achieve a successful settlement on behalf of our member.



# AM BRADFORD STREETS

efighter,  
ate over who is to “blame” for the recent Bradford riots  
edia is lacking any analysis of the role of Nazi  
tions.  
far right are attempting to organise race riots in cities in  
th West, to capitalise on the electoral success of the  
ational Party in the General Election. We have already  
d racist gangs rampaging through Oldham and Burnley,  
g Asians and petrol bombing shops and restaurants.  
riot in Bradford was caused by a leading member of  
18 throwing the first punch, while hurling racist abuse  
up of Asians. Combat 18 contains the most violent of  
Nazis as members.  
Anti Nazi League had organised a rally in response to  
y the National Front march. Our rally was peaceful,  
d by over 2,000 people – black, white and Asian,  
the young and the elderly. MPs, Councillors, trade  
s and anti-racists were united in defending our  
ltural and multi-racial society, which the Nazis are out  
py.  
Leader, Nick Griffin, who has convictions for race hatred  
ocaust denial, addressed a meeting of 150 people in  
d.  
n assessing the violence, we must examine the role of  
e in allowing leading Nazis to openly walk the streets of  
d taunting anti-racists and creating tension. The Nazis  
mockery of the Government ban to stop them marching.  
sonally identified a group of Nazis to the police and  
r them to be monitored. The police responded by body  
g the young Asians around me.  
e wake of the McPherson Report and the conviction of  
bomber David Copeland it would appear that the  
ave learnt nothing.

**Julie Waterson**  
**National Organiser, Anti Nazi League**  
**PO Box 2566, London N4 1WJ**

## UBLIC SERVICE ATTACKS: E WE NEXT IN LINE?

efighter,  
should be surprised at the latest turn of events, with Blair  
ough on the reform of Public Services. He went for the  
service, the Health Service, Education, introducing PFI and  
g the Unions; don't forget Pastor Niemöller's lament “and  
y came for me”. Are we next?

Independent Labour Party and I quote “Labour Parliamentary  
representation independent of all other parties, together with a  
commitment to some kind of Socialism.”

The ideals and commitment of the late 1800s – early 1900s  
could be brought up to date and forwarded into the 21st  
Century, with people like Tony Benn, Rodney Bickerstaffe, Ken  
Cameron and others, being invited to use their experience,  
knowledge and undoubted skills, to bring to an early Congress a  
constitution for reforming, in a modern way, a true, independent  
party of Labour.

**John Griffiths**  
**OOT Member No. 7 Region**

## THERE IS NO REAL OPPOSITION TO LABOUR

Dear Firefighter,  
Owing to my disillusionment with the Labour Government I was  
forced to vote Green on 7 June.

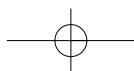
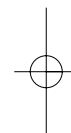
As you know, the gap between rich and poor has widened  
since Labour came to power and the Government has failed in  
many of its policies set out in their 1997 manifesto.

They have thrown money at the NHS and have failed to  
recognise that the Social Services also need funding. Many beds  
are taken over by the elderly who are upset and worried, when  
all they need is to be returned home with a carer or a place in a  
Residential Home. But there are no funds to deal with this. This  
is only one example of Labour's inefficiency.

They have put in the money for NHS, education, police, but  
not much progress has been made. The matter is not helped by  
the Prime Minister's insistence on taking charge when he ought  
to be delegating the duties to his Ministers. He comes across as a  
control freak and this put off many voters on the 7th. Thousands  
of young people failed to vote. They have lost interest in politics.  
I only voted because of the memory of those who worked and  
died so women could have the vote. I cannot stress enough how  
strongly I feel about Labour's inefficiency.

One problem is there is no real opposition to Labour. The  
Tories are flat on their backs and the Lib-Dems are notable by  
their absence. Peter Preston in the Guardian has recommended  
the Lib-Dems now move to the left of Labour. A friend of mine  
has suggested there be an alignment of the left across all parties,  
but I'm not sure if this is feasible or practical. But something has  
to be done – and now.

You cannot but have noticed the scenes in Gothenburg  
where for the first time police have shot at protesters. This was a  
democratic protest, as Tony Benn pointed out in The Guardian,  
marred by a few hundred anarchists. Surely the best thing to do  
is try and root out the latter. Genoa was closed down at the next



meeting of Ministers. That cannot be right.

I leave it here for now. I do my bit as an individual. How many children will have died worldwide from AIDS and starvation as you read this letter?

**Firefighter Byron**

## DEATH PENALTY – WHY KEEP PICKING ON THE USA?

Dear Firefighter,

The article in the last magazine by John Duffy on capital punishment in the USA was informed and interesting, but why do people keep picking on USA? In terms of the death penalty, there are far more dubious uses of this sanction in third-world countries and industrialised ones such as China. However, I disagree with Mr. Duffy on most points.

Is it justice, retribution or murder? Surely any punitive act by person or state is retribution of a sort be it death, prison or fine? I don't hold with the idea that execution by the State or any other form of criminal punishment is, or is meant to be a deterrent; if it were and it worked, there would be no need for prisons etc. The death penalty and other State punishment is just that a punishment, no more.

The alternative to capital punishment is "Life in prison to mean life in prison." I do not really believe that incarceration for 30 years or for life where a human being, however evil, is deprived of their liberty, their natural needs such as to eat and drink what and where they please, to aspire to procreate and to indulge in the many other natural functions the human spirit requires, is in any way a "humane" treatment and is certainly in my view, more barbaric than humane execution.

When a person has been proved guilty beyond all reasonable doubt (a difficult definition I agree), then lethal injection can be the only humane form of execution. Normally an overdose of anaesthetic injection is the most effective agent (as occasionally occurs in surgery), although not without occasional side effects – again as occasionally occurs in surgery.

When people choose to consciously take the life of another illegally for their own ends, then the people via the State, must reserve the right to apply the alternate sanction as a punishment.

The opinion on the death penalty quoted to Bud Welch was heartfelt, but was it the overall opinion of the relatives of the other 167 victims of Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma City?

Consider this if you will. If Timothy McVeigh had escaped to any of the EU countries he would still be a free man in that the EU (with no mandate from its citizens), has decreed that it will not extradite wanted criminals to any country which may impose the death penalty on them. Would you consider this circumstance to be natural justice? I don't.

**R. Thomas**  
**OOT Member, Spain**

## SYMPATHIES LIE WITH OFFENDER, NOT VICTIM

Dear Firefighter,

Following the article "More problems than solutions" in the July/August issue of Firefighter magazine, I would like to offer an alternative view to the death penalty in the USA.

Reading through Mr. Duffy's well presented, but ultimately flawed essay, it becomes immediately clear that his sympathies lie more with the persons convicted of murder than the victims of the crime committed.

The argument that execution is also murder is unfounded.

Execution is the state sponsored legally sanctioned form of putting individuals convicted of murder(s) or terrorism to death.

Murder is killing innocent people with intent.

Mr. Duffy states that anybody who has doubts about the death penalty should look to the "chaos" of the US system.

I decided to research this "chaos", but found little or no evidence. I was struck by the complexity of the appeals structure, as this is engineered to ensure that the prisoner has every opportunity to present his proof of innocence thus reducing the chances of being wrongly convicted.

The argument of wrongful executions of innocent individuals on death row in the United States is very weak. Since the reinstatement of the Death Penalty in 1975 there has not been one officially recorded wrongful executive of an innocent person.

The US legal system and its competent and thorough appeals process disallow that from happening. Any death row inmate that is proven innocent is exonerated and freed early in the appeals process. The death row inmates that are executed are guilty beyond any reasonable doubt after having had their case thoroughly reviewed time and time again and the appeals exhausted.

After 1992 the execution rates in America increased considerably after reforms in the appeals process led to streamlining of the system and to curb abuses and manipulations of the appeals system. Death row inmates have routinely manipulated the system to delay their sentences being carried out.

As Mr. Duffy correctly points out, most executions are carried out by either lethal injection or electrocution. He then includes some anecdotal reports from executions.

Using Mr. Duffy's own examples, I think it is more important that members know the reasons why the following death row prisoners were executed as to any perceived difficulties with the execution process.

Death row inmates' manner of death by US forms of execution pales in comparison with the manner their murder victims were murdered – shot, stabbed, ran over, doused and burnt alive, sliced and slashed, tortured, strangled, bludgeoned,

## LETTERS

beheaded, mutilated and so on.

Bert Leroy Hunter

December 15 1988, Hunter and accomplice Thomas Ervin, suffocate 49 year old Richard Hodges and his mother 78 year old Mildred Hodges, during a robbery at Richard's Jefferson City home.

Bennie Demps

Whilst already in prison for an unrelated offence, he stabbed to death a fellow inmate.

There is something quite perverse about a convicted murderer complaining about correction officers trying to stick a needle in his arm causing him "a lot of pain".

What prisoner Demps was complaining about was the minor surgical procedure known as "cutdown". This involves cutting the skin and pulling out a vein when one cannot be located with a needle.

Scott Dawn Carpenter

Convicted of stabbing a store clerk to death.

Pedro Medina

Executed for stabbing to death an Orlando school teacher.

Medina's attorneys tried to stop the execution on the grounds he was insane. Florida law prohibits execution of the insane.

Prosecutors argued successfully that Medina had been faking mental illness to avoid the death penalty.

It may pain Mr. Duffy to note that while he fights to end the death penalty in the US, he is in fact in the minority.

Gallop have produced a poll for every year asking a cross section of US citizens if they are in favour of or against the death penalty. Just taking the figures since 1995 shows that those in favour range from 66-77 per cent. Since we do live in a democracy, it appears the US Government has called this issue correctly.

Capital punishment in every state is more expensive than a life imprisonment sentence without the opportunity of parole. These costs are not the result of frivolous appeals, but rather the result of constitutionally mandated safeguards that can be summarised as follows:

Juries must be given clear guidelines on sentencing, which result in explicit provisions for what constitutes aggravating and mitigating circumstances.

Defendants must have a dual trial – one to establish guilt or innocence and if guilty, a second trial to determine whether or not they would get the death penalty.

Defendants sentenced to death are granted oversight protection in an automatic appeal to the state supreme court.

These constitutional safeguards translate into:

A more extensive jury selection procedure

More investigators and expert testimony

A four-fold increase in the number of motions filed

More lawyers specialising in death penalty litigation

A longer, dual trial process

And automatic, mandatory appeals

Since there are few defendants who will plead guilty to a

capital charge, virtually every death penalty trial becomes a jury trial with all of the above necessary requirements and expenses.

Since the object of the exercise is to provide a just punishment for the crime committed, the financial implications of providing a state execution should be viewed in the context of getting justice done.

I do not oppose the death penalty. Murderers and terrorists must know that if they commit the ultimate crime of murder, then they may face the ultimate state punishment.

I feel the following statement from the Supreme Court of the US can best sum it up.

"Indeed, the decision that capital punishment may be appropriate sanction is an expression of the community's belief that certain crimes are themselves so gross to humanity that the only adequate response may be the penalty of death."

**D. Jones**

**West Yorkshire**

## MEMORIES OF PRE-WAR TRADE UNION ACTIVITY

Dear Firefighter,

Memories come flooding back in the case of long-term OOT members and what we were able to assist in achieving will continue to be a matter of pride and great satisfaction.

My FBU activities in Southampton led to my election to the Presidency of the Trades Council and the formation of a unique "Joint Council" linking the local Labour Party, the Co-operative Party and of course, the Trades Council.

Pre-war association with anti-Nazi friends in Berlin inspired me to contact Karl Oesterle, the General Secretary of the Hamburg Trades Council and Herman Theede of the Firemen's Trade Union, then in process of reconstruction, and I was honoured with an invitation to attend a Conference in Stuttgart, inaugurating the re-creation of the post-war German Firemen's Trade Union. Unfortunately, circumstances made this visit impossible.

It is gratifying to know that the FBU is, like many Trade Unions, a staunch supporter of "Amnesty International" and I am proud to be a long-term activist of "A.I." in its pursuit of human rights and the abolition of political, religious and racial persecution and torture worldwide.

If I may be permitted to make an appeal to other Out of Trade members, I would urge them to offer their services to voluntary organisations, even if they can only spare a few hours weekly. The five years I spent with Citizens' Advice Bureau was very rewarding and in its way, as challenging as firefighting. Such services are desperately in need of assistance and the needs of the public are many and diverse. Please help!

**Jack Rogers**

**OOT Member**



## THE KILLERS OF SHIBLU RAHMAN MUST BE CAUGHT

Dear Firefighter,

I am writing in response to the article in your July/August 2001 edition concerning the murder of my constituent Mr. Shiblu Rahman.

There has already been extensive pressure on the authorities to respond to the real concerns of the family about Mr. Rahman's death. Some answers have already been forthcoming. Others are promised and some will only come out through due process at the trial and/or inquest.

"Justice for the Rahman Family" will mainly be achieved if those that are responsible for his death are brought to justice. Both the White and Asian residents of the estate where he lived have helped the police with information and arrests have been made (not all youths as you report). Every tragedy of this kind provides us with lessons to be learnt. Shiblu's death must lead to improvements in the emergency services' responses. However, some of your account is not entirely accurate, but your letters column is not the place to debate them as you were only printing supplied copy.

Be assured that I am in direct contact with the family (not the NAAR) and I have been doing all that I can to assist them and their solicitor and I will continue to do so.

**Jim Fitzpatrick MP**

## FREEMASONS WOULD NOT TOLERATE THIS CONDUCT

Dear Firefighter,

I am writing to express my surprise and concern that the journal of a Union respected for its inclusive policies is willing to engage in the character assassination of a part of its membership. I refer to the section "The Secret of Promotion", which infers some Masonic interference by an ADO in a promotion procedure.

Firstly, I question why a "temporary Lff" can't be reduced in rank by an ADO and wonder when anyone in a temporary position was reduced back to their substantive rank ever had the right to continue in higher rank at the end of the period?

Secondly, perhaps the ADO was promoted on his personal merits and the quality of his work during his own temporary promotion? – I am sure at least some of our leaders have earned their positions on merit, Freemasons or not.

If the author of "The 5th Column" had insinuated that a female firefighter or a gay or lesbian member had been promoted because of their sexuality or gender, would the Editor have printed the article? Would these column inches have been used if the ADO was a Rotarian, a Golf Club member or in The Lions? I wonder.

Such conduct is in any case regarded as highly un-Masonic and would not be tolerated by any Freemasons I know.

**Name and Address supplied**

## MERSEYSIDE: THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Dear Firefighter,

I would just like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Newton-le-Willows Branch, Merseyside, to thank our friends and colleagues for their fantastic moral and financial support during our recent dispute.

The turnout for the march in Liverpool on Friday 13 July was overwhelming and certainly added to our determination to succeed in defending OUR hard fought conditions of service. It was also great to see so many of our colleagues from all over the country attend the lobby of the Fire Authority and visit the pickets.

I would also like to thank all the Union Officials, local, Brigade and National for the work they did in ensuring a well deserved victory.

**P. Costello  
Branch Chair**

## DID CFO CHANGE HIS TUNE OVER MANAGEMENT?

Dear Firefighter,

The latest issue of Firefighter (July/August 2001), Issue 3 of the Firefighter Merseyside Special and the July 2001 Fire Engineers Journal all arrived at about the same time.

In the Fire Engineers Journal was a brief report on the "IFE North Western Branch 2001 Debate" which, it says, took place on 2nd April 2001. The subject for debate was reported as, "This house believes the Fire Service of the 21st century can be led from outside its ranks." The debate appears to have been hardly memorable except for the link with the subsequent strike in Merseyside. The current Chief Fire Officer of Merseyside spoke against the motion.

Quoting directly from the Journal:

"He opened by declaring that organisations ranging from the United Nations right down to Parish Councils needed the right people to run them. Mr. Saunders gave some excellent examples of the failures of some organisations that had chosen the external managers route e.g. public utilities, coal industry and the rail network. His view was that today's service and the public had greater expectations of the need for change. He concluded that the Fire Service was a specialised profession and that it

## LETTERS

should be run by specialists within and not by outside managers.”

This stance seems to be at odds with subsequent actions. Whatever the stated aims of appointing non-uniformed staff as fire officers the policy would result, in reality, in two tier entry. Whether two tier entry (or multi-tier entry) into the Fire Service is good or bad is a matter for extensive debate. If it was decided that there would be some benefits from other than single tier entry, there would be the necessity for a considerable amount of preparatory work to be undertaken. That work would involve wide consultation in order to determine the best method of selection, the scope and depth of the training, the means of achieving practical experience and an outline for continued professional development of the individuals. There would also need to be debate as to the conditions of service of this new breed of fire officer.

Perhaps the Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority, together with their Chief Fire Officer have already developed such a system for selection, training etc, or perhaps they were just going to trust to luck. Whatever they have or have not organised, it seems to be an immense conceit for them to assume that they should be the sole arbiters of two-tier entry into the Fire Service. Particularly so when their Chief Fire Officer has stated that the Fire Service should be run by specialists within and not by outside managers.

**Michael Dennett, OOT Member**

## A BIG THANK YOU AND OUR BEST WISHES

Dear Firefighter,

On 22 February 2001 we, along with others, took part in blockades of five regional chilled food distribution centres belonging to J. Sainsbury, in opposition to that company's selling of meat, poultry and dairy products reared on GM animal feed – with no labelling and without regard to the potential effects on food safety and the environment.

The police summoned a fire crew to Sainsbury's Elstree Depot in Borehamwood, to remove protesters (ourselves) who were on top of and underneath lorries and attached to gates, secured by D-locks and other methods.

The crew who attended, who we think were from the Hertfordshire Fire Service, did not immediately follow police instructions and instead discussed the matter with some of the protesters. They agreed not to use their equipment to remove us against our wishes.

This allowed the action to continue (it lasted ten hours) and was also a tremendous morale boost for us.

Shortly after their action Sainsbury's improved their position, and have now phased out poultry products which are GM-fed.

On Friday 28 September, those of us who were arrested at the Borehamwood depot were all found not guilty of criminal trespass and obstruction offences.

A big thank-you and our best wishes to the fire crew members involved.

**Tom Lichy, Naomi Davies, Elanor Hutson, Natja Thobjornsen, Kenneth Fox, Jessica Thuresson, Stella Wood, Jacqueline Sheedy, Christopher Holden, Timothy Jones, Noah Tucker**

## IS MEDICAL APPEAL SYSTEM UNBIASED?

Dear Firefighter,

I have to ask the question: Is the Medical Appeals System totally independent and unbiased as we are led to believe, or do these boards have a pre-set agenda?

Last year I was medically retired from the Fire Service after twenty seven and a half years service (I sustained an injury to my back in 1987). Following two years rehabilitation, which included a number of months in various hospitals, I returned to light duties, then after retraining, I managed to gain operational fitness.

This accident was accepted by the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service as a work related injury and the then Department of Health & Social Security accepted the accident as an industrial injury and assessed me as being 15 per cent disabled.



**Check for the latest  
news on our website**

**[www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)**



Approximately three years later, I was given a day post position in the rank of Sub Officer at Fire Brigade Headquarters. I held this post until my medical retirement in September 2000. During my time at Headquarters, my back condition got progressively worse, which Senior Officers were aware of, but I managed to remain at work.

I tripped on the main staircase at Brigade Headquarters on a number of occasions, jarring my back and aggravating my existing injury. The Fire Brigade accepted this as an injury at work as did the Department of Social Security, but our occupational health doctor claimed that mine was not a work related injury and therefore I was not entitled to a medical enhancement on my pension.

Therefore, I appealed against the doctor's decision and under the guidance of our Brigade Chair – Mr. David Dymond, and with the help of Mr. Peter Miller – Region 13 Regional Chair, my appeal was put together. With large amounts of documentation we went to the Medical Appeal Board believing we were in with a reasonable chance of winning. I felt the whole proceedings were loaded against me right from the onset. To be asked questions that I felt were not relevant to the proceedings, but being prepared to give honest answers, which were so very obviously not believed and disregarded even though there was documented evidence proving my statements to be correct.

The Board made me feel uneasy and ill prepared, even though we had spent weeks preparing our case. What came across was that the Board wanted this out of the way as quickly as possible. Whilst they portrayed that they were only too willing to give us the opportunity to put across my side of events, I now believe this was a "lip service" procedure.

It would appear following their report that they completely disregarded the evidence we had put before them and needless to say, I have lost my medical appeal. At this moment, I understand that David Dymond is seeking legal advice to ascertain if there is another direction we can take, or is this the end of the line for me?

If this is the case and it is the end of the line, then I have to say that the system is unfair and unjust and the Union should be considering re-negotiating a far fairer system than the one we have in place at the moment. I cannot believe for one moment that I am the only individual that has been treated in this way during a medical appeal.

I would like to finish by thanking Firefighter for giving me the opportunity of voicing my concerns against the Medical Appeals Procedure we have in place and hope that I am given the opportunity to have this decision overturned if possible ... and how glad I am that I continued with my membership of The Fire Brigades Union following my medical retirement.

**M R Fox**  
**OOT Member**

## ROSSINGTON NUM DISPUTE WITH UK COAL

Dear Firefighter,

We are seeking support throughout the Trade Union Movement to sustain us through our dispute with our Employer, UK Coal.


Already we have received a magnificent gesture from your comrades in South Yorks and Humberside. It would be greatly appreciated therefore if you would be so kind as to circulate our Fact Sheet to Branches/Areas throughout; our members are suffering hardship because they have dared to take on the Employer in an effort to gain fair and just rewards for their labour.

Your efforts on our behalf would be most welcome for our Branch Members and our families.

**Chris Skidmore**


**Rossington Branch Delegate, National Union of Mineworkers, Yorkshire Area, 33 Witham Court, Higham, Barnsley S75 1PX.**

National Union of Mineworkers  
**ROSSINGTON  
BRANCH**  
Legal Dispute **ALL OUT STRIKE Week 4**



**SUPPORT ROSSINGTON MINERS**

- UK Coal's demand that only 20% of the Rossington mine's output be allowed to be sold is a demand that the mine be closed.
- THIS COULD MEAN THAT ROSSINGTON MINE COULD PRODUCE ONE MILLION TONNES OF COAL FROM THE BOWLS OF THE SOUTH YORKS AND HUMBERSIDE REGION.



- NUM Rossington Branch have made a demand to settle the dispute with UK Coal and to have the mine closed by the end of the month and to be paid £100,000 per week.
- Miners at Rossington work as hard as any miner for UK Coal Ltd, in fact Rossington coal is a better quality product than most – so why are we being treated differently?
- According to NUM, UK Coal have made a demand to have the mine closed by the end of the month and to be paid £100,000 per week. This is a demand that the mine be closed by the end of the month and to be paid £100,000 per week.
- The cost to settle the NUM Rossington Branch claim is £6,500,000 per week.
- UK Coal Ltd received £3.2 million from the government to help move Rossington Colliery forward.
- Why have UK Coal spent £3.5 million so far in order to impose their ultimatum? We can only assume that UK Coal Ltd has another agenda.

**ROSSINGTON MINERS' DEMAND A FAIR SETTLEMENT  
WE WILL NOT BE STARVED INTO SUBMISSION**

- If you are able to make a financial contribution it would be much appreciated. The NUM have the right to ask for this but it is up to you whether you want to contribute or not.
- The NUM will not be able to pay for the strike.
- If you would like to offer information or a speaker then please contact us.
- Checklist of NUM should be made please send to NUM Rossington Branch, 33 Witham Court, Higham, Barnsley S75 1PX.



**OBITUARY**

# A big man in every sense



**This is TUC General Secretary John Monks' eulogy at the requiem mass for Jimmy Knapp**

IT WAS Rodney Bickerstaffe who first said of Jimmy: "What you see is what you get"

And what I saw, and what I invariably got, and Norman Willis before me, was wise counsel, huge integrity, strong support, and steadfast friendship.

Jimmy was one of the best known trade unionists of our generation, certainly the most widely mimicked.

You did not have to be Rory Bremner to catch the essence of those trademark Ayrshire tones – though that did not stop Rory from making Jimmy one of the stars of his act.

But not everyone could quite master Jimmy's voice.

It was Tony Dubbins who told the story of how, during one period when Jimmy was on the radio more often than Terry Wogan, a London radio station ran a phone-in competition for the best Jimmy Knapp voice.

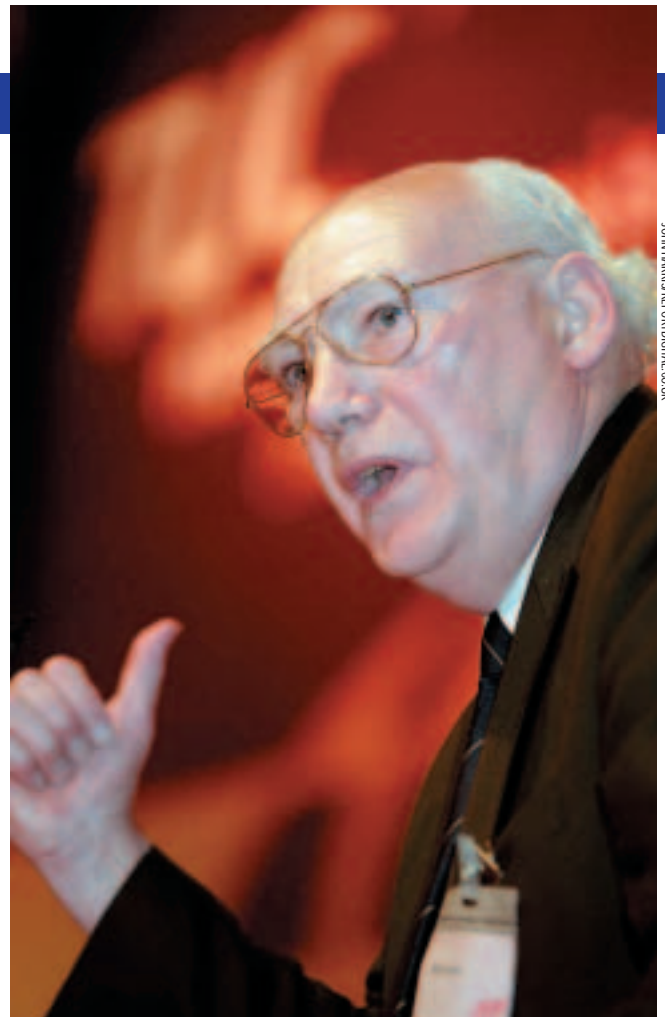
After listening to a few passable imitations, Jimmy decided that the prize money would make a useful contribution to the union strike fund and called the radio station himself.

He had only managed a couple of sentences when the presenter interrupted him, saying, "that's nothing like Jimmy Knapp, you are clearly an Englishman, get off the air." Jimmy's protestations merely brought the response. "You might be Jimmy Knapp, but you don't sound like him."

Jimmy was a railwayman to the core. He started his working life as a signalman at the age of 15 in his native Ayrshire, where he was finally laid to rest. His entire working life was devoted to the railways. What has happened to the industry in recent years saddened him deeply.

Throughout the changes, he always sought the best for his members but he never ignored the industry and the travelling public. He was never trigger-happy but if supporting the Union's members meant industrial action he never flinched.

From those days in the signal box, and from the Socialist Sunday school before that, Jimmy learned about discipline and about sticking to the rules.



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTAGE.CO.UK

It gave him a solid base during those difficult years as General Secretary of a union right at the centre of the political and industrial storms; within the Labour Party undergoing its unprecedented period of change; and within the TUC, where I greatly valued his innovative support, as we sought to adjust the organisation from a committee based machine into an outwardly focussed campaigning organisation.

During 1994, Jimmy's year as President of Congress we saw all TUC and union matters the same way. Our only two rows were about the conduct of Mike Atherton – the England cricket captain no less who was found tampering with the ball – and of Eric Cantona who practiced his kung fu on a spectator at Crystal Palace at a game we were watching together. I took a rather tolerant, some might say, biased view. But Jimmy was clear. They had behaved in a manner unbecoming and should go. We argued about it for months.

The term 'gentleman' is not entirely fashionable today but Jimmy was a great, natural gentleman.

He was also a great President of the TUC. Scrupulously fair, totally committed, and keenly aware of the honour that had been bestowed upon him. His meetings always started on time. We usually reached the right conclusions. If only the rail companies were as punctual.

Principles were never sacrificed in Jimmy's world. But that did not detract from his skills as a negotiator. Indeed it enhanced his standing with friend and foe alike. There have been many employers who recognise Jimmy's qualities and some of them are here today.

It says much about Jimmy that he was first choice whenever

we needed someone of standing to help resolve an inter-union dispute, and he had recently been appointed a member of the ACAS Council.

Jimmy was modest, warm and generous. He may have risen to the heights but he retained strong affection for those who devoted their spare time to trade unionism and they in turn recognised his dedication, straightness, courage and innate decency.

He was for many years, the Chair of the TUC South East Regional Council; and he remained until his death, the Chair of our Trades Council Committee.

He was held in high regard by all within the Trades Councils Movement. In fact, that's the only thing on which they have ever been unanimous.

He was one of the great trade union leaders of this generation. But he had the timeless qualities that would stand out in any generation.

But for all those timeless qualities, let us not forget the impact which Jimmy had on trade unionism today.

He was on the side of the workers, but he knew a bit about capitalism too. He was one of the driving forces behind Unity Trust Bank and Trade Union Unit Trusts.

He was also one of the trustees of the TUC Pension Fund – that's how much we trusted him.

He was committed to trade union education too and deserves great credit for what has been described as the quiet revolution – the growth of the learning rep as the third force within trade unionism alongside the shop steward and the safety rep; someone who campaigns and champions access to learning as a worker's right and as a real benefit to the employers too. These learning reps will be our next generation of shop stewards.

Fittingly he managed to be in Congress House a few months ago for the re-launch of the TUC's education service.

The tabloids' dinosaur tag was always ridiculous. Jimmy was an innovator, one of the very first union leaders to embrace, for example, community groups in his rail and seafaring campaigns and one of the first to use opinion surveys.

And in that territory between the trade union movement and the Labour Party, Jimmy strode over the past two decades with confidence; it's been a minefield, but Jimmy carried an instinctive mine detector – winning some, losing some – but respected and liked by all. I sincerely believe that the Party and the trade union movement are both in a much better state thanks to him.

He was a great internationalist too. He was an out and out champion of the Anti-Apartheid Movement when others had reservations and qualifications. I remember that he went to South Africa in spite of opposition from the ICFTU and from the TUC. We had good reasons at the time but the verdict of history is on Jimmy's side.

Finally I'd like to say thanks to Jimmy, he was known in RMT as the big man and he was a Big Man in every sense. It has been an enriching and privileged experience for me to have known and worked with him.

## 25 YEAR BADGES



Brother Cowley receives his 25 year badge from Speedwell (Avon) Branch Chair Kevin Herniman as colleagues from Red Watch look on



Michael Fell of the Tynemouth branch receives his 25 year badge from Branch Chair Russell King



Gerry Fairfield, Springfield Branch Region 2, is presented with a 25 year badge by Branch Secretary Tommy Morrow



G Holiday and J Murphy of Immington East (Humberside) congratulate each other on receiving their 25 year badges.



Alun Jones of Old Swan Station, Merseyside, receives his 25 year badge from Peter Hough



# 25 YEAR BADGES



Danny Bowan receives his 25 year badge from Chester Branch Secretary Chris Rodaway



Alan Isaac receives his 25 year badge from Barnstaple Branch Chair Colin Piper



Bob King receives his 25 year badge from the Branch Chair of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue



Kevin Marshall of Tynemouth branch receives his 25 year badge from Tyne and Wear Brigade Vice Chair Keith Walters



Harry Mason, Stew Johnson and Jim Sabiston receiving their 25 year badges from Tyne and Wear Brigade Vice Chair Keith Walters



John Mackintosh receives his 25 year badge and some local produce from John Urquhart



Terry Plane of Region 11 receives his 25 year badge from Pan Poullais



Malcolm Pollock receives his 25 year badge from the Branch Chair of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue



Geoff Strachan receives his 25 year badge from Speedwell (Avon) Branch Chair Kevin Herniman



Phil Sullivan receives his 25 year badge from Chester Branch Secretary Nick Bough



Michael Toghill receives his 25 year badge from Region 11 Rep Pan Poullais



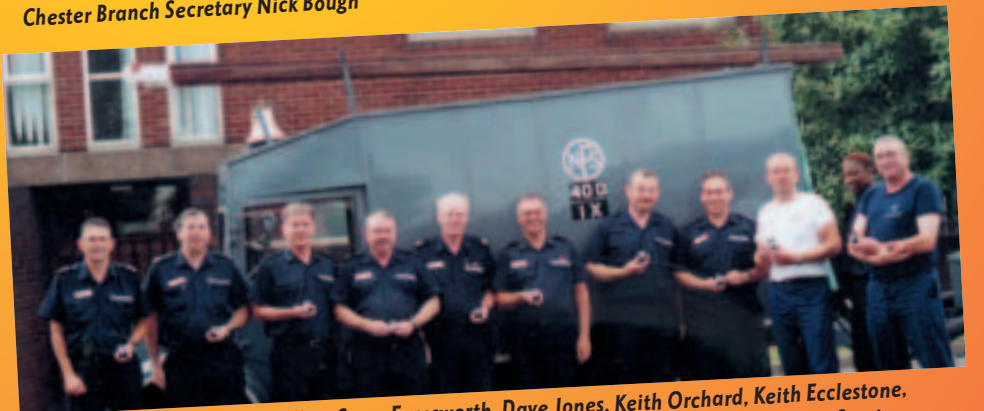
Phil Walsh receives his 25 year FBU badge from Chester Branch Chair Nick Gough



Firefighter Watkins (centre) and Firefighter Copley (right) receive their 25 year badges from Branch Secretary Nick Caley (left). In attendance is Eileen Gordon (former Labour MP for Romford) and John Davis, a retired firefighter. His family started the Fire Brigade in Romford.



Mike Worrall, Roger Harris and Peter Higgins receiving their 25 year badges from Jeff Chadwick, Chester Branch



Kevin Jenkins, Andrew MacMillan, Steve Farnsworth, Dave Jones, Keith Orchard, Keith Ecclestone, Kevin Cartright, Gary Coley, Paul Klosowicz, and Neil Griffiths, all of Wolverhampton Fire Service, receive their 25 year badges from Branch Secretary Samantha Gordon